

A Practical Experience
at *The New Age*

Khondokar Nusrat Hossain

07303016

Department of English and Humanities

December 2010



BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

A Practical Experience
at *The New Age*

A Report Submitted to
The department of English and Humanities
Of
BRAC University

By
Khondokar Nusrat Hossain
Student ID: 07303016

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts in English
December 2010

Acknowledgement:

Firstly, I would like to thank my respected teacher Mahtab Haider for teaching me everything I know about journalism and also to introduce me with *The New Age Xtra*. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisors Roohi Huda who guided me during my internship and Sabreena Ahmed who helped me to write the report with her valuable advice. Thirdly, my heartfelt gratitude to my editor Mubin S. Khan and the entire team of *New Age Xtra*. Without their help and guidance I could not have learnt so many things about journalism. And finally, I would like to thank my chairperson Professor Firdous Azim and my honourable teacher Professor Syed Manzoorul Islam for their motivation and advice during my university life.

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Journey of New Age.....	3
3. A brief of New Age Xtra.....	5
4. Working for New Age Xtra.....	9
5. Event Covering.....	21
6. Working for a Cover story.....	24
7. Challenges I faced.....	30
8. A personal account.....	33
9. Conclusion.....	34
Appendices.....	36

1. Introduction

Newspaper has always been a fascination for me. I still remember that when I was in class three my mother and father made it mandatory for me to read newspaper everyday. Surprisingly, though I was a kid it was not at all uninteresting for me than reading story books. However, as a beginner I was more allured by the pages for children and sports but I also never missed headlines about politics or what is happening around the world.

As I grew up, it always bothered me, why in the school essay 'My Aim in Life,' we do not write about any other occupation except doctor, engineer and teacher? I've always wanted to read about journalists, people who work hard day and night to present the truth before us. Although it was really a bit disappointing for me that I have never encountered anything about journalism during my school or college days but a desire of being a journalist has secretly grown up with me. When I took admission in BRAC University and came to know about Media and Cultural Studies courses, consisting of courses like Editing, Print Media, and Globalisation, I finally got a chance to make my dream come true.

During my editing course, our respected teacher Mahtab Haider who is also a renowned journalist took us to the office of the New Age to give a practical idea of how a newspaper office is run. That day I got really interested about doing my internship at the New Age. Later, I started my internship with the weekend magazine "New Age Xtra" of the New Age. During my three months at New Age Xtra, I was mostly involved with the section called 'Sketches' where I had to take interviews of prominent personalities of the country. This was a great opportunity for me because every interview was different from each other as I took

interviews of different personalities from different professions, and each interview increased my confidence and taught me something new.

Although mostly I had to take interviews but I also got chance to cover two events and worked with one of my colleagues for a cover story about vulnerable buildings of Dhaka city. Moreover, I had to do short profile interviews for another supplement of New Age, which was a lifestyle magazine called, 'TRENDS.' These three months' experience of internship at The New Age is going to help me a lot for my career in future and I am really thankful to The New Age and Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University to give me this opportunity.

2. The Journey of *The New Age*:

On July 7, 2003, the New Age began its journey with late Enayetullah Khan, the founding editor of the newspaper. At the beginning it was a 12 page newspaper but at present it is a 20 page broadsheet newspaper that costs tk. 7 on usual days and tk. 10 on days when supplements get published. It divides its news under the pages called National, Metro, International, Editorial, Op-ed, Timeout, Business and Sports. There are two weekly magazines called “Trends” and “Xtra”. “Trends” is a lifestyle magazine that gets published on Tuesday and “Xtra” comes out of Fridays which deals with different current issues of national and international current political, social, and cultural fields.

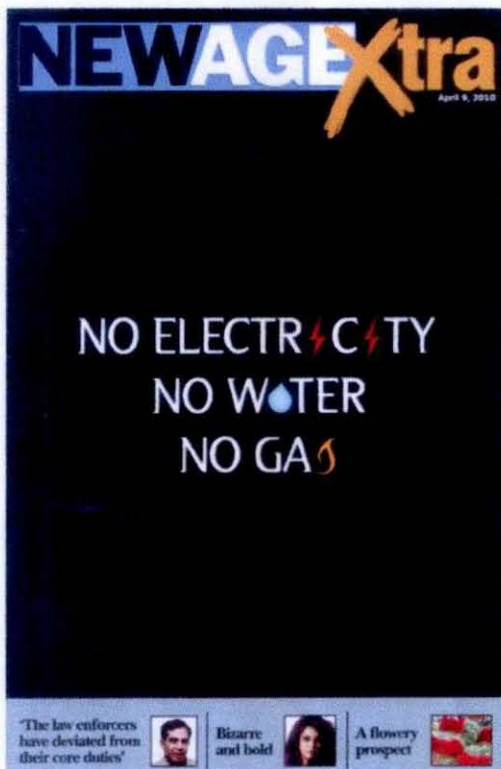
Moreover, on different major occasions, it publishes special supplements like “New Age year Special,” “Women’s Day Special,” “Victory Day Special,” “New Age Eid Special,” “Anniversary Special,” “Ekushey Special,” “A special in Remembrance of Enayetullah Khan,” “New Age Heroes” to make the day in focus for their readers.

New Age goes through six stages of production before it gets published. Firstly, reporters bring news to the newsroom. Sometimes they even mail, fax, and make phone calls from the spot if it is an urgent situation. Then the news are checked by the chief reporter. Chief Reporter checks the accuracy of the news and makes sure that the sources are reliable and the angles of looking at the news item in their reports are appropriate. The chief reporter may call up the sources to make sure the information is reliable. After checking he sends the news to the central desk where the second step takes place. There the editing is done by the group of editors. Spelling mistakes are checked in this phase along with ensuring if the names appearing in the

news are written correctly. Also, sentences are improved and proper headlines are given according to the main focus of each news item. During the third and fourth step, “Metro,” “National,” “International,” “Business,” “Sports” and “Home” pages are designed. In the fifth stage, page make up of the newspaper takes place where photos are attached along with captions. All these items are arranged on an aluminium foil which is sent to the printing press. In the final stage papers are distributed through different distributors and hawkers to the whole country.

3. A Brief of *New Age Xtra*:

When I decided to do my internship at New Age, my teacher Mahtab Haider suggested that first I should read the newspaper for one week as there are different sections and then I should apply for my internship to the chief reporter or editor of the section that attracted me more than the others. His advice was really helpful for me as I came to know about *New Age*'s weekend magazine *New Age Xtra*. When I saw the magazine for the first time, it immediately caught my eyes because of its amusing cover page. It was a black page and in the middle of the page was written, "No Electricity, No Gas, No Water" (April 9, 2010). The cover page depicted mass



people's sufferings during the summer. I think, this was a really unique presentation of that time. Moreover, the cover story was divided into three separate segments which were about Electricity, Gas and Water and each of them brought out the problems people are facing along with expert opinions.

Later, when I went to meet the editor of New Age Xtra, Mubin S. Khan, he gave me some practical advice about print media. He said, "Always try to collect as much as authentic information from your

sources and

**Figure 1: Cover Page of New Age Xtra,
09 April 2010.**

also give your reader as much as reliable facts you can. Many people think being good in English is the only criteria for a journalist of an English newspaper, but it is a misconception. One's writing can be improved in the editing room but information cannot be improved in the editing room." He also said, "If you just fill up the magazine pages with stories among which only five is important for your reader then it is better to fill up the pages with details of those five important stories."

New age Xtra has always tried to follow what Mubin S. Khan advised me. It is a 40 page magazine which covers national and international social, political, sports and cultural issues. In the first page of the magazine, contents are given along with photos and page numbers. Page two starts with the section called "Inbox"

Dear editor,

The entire Dhaka city is now in a terrible situation at the face of acute water crisis, alongside the electricity and gas. The quantity of water that common people are receiving is stinky and harmful to health. Still, the people are helplessly taking the water ignoring the health hazards. Hundreds of patients are turning up at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B). As a citizen of the country, I request the government to take steps to tackle the situation.

Ashraful Alam

Figure 2: "Inbox", New Age Extra, (*The New Age* 09 April 2010).

where readers send their feedback to the editor about the previously published stories.

After the section “Inbox,” comes the section “Mediabites”



**Figure 3: cartoon of media bites, New Age Xtra
(The New Age 09 April, 2010)**

where interesting and important quotes made by politicians or other important personalities are published. Then comes “Art Calendar” and “This Week in History.” “Art calendar” inform readers about exhibitions, film shows and theatre that are taking place on the specific week.

“This Week in History” is a pick of historically significant events of the corresponding week as reported in Bangladeshi newspapers of the time.

Then comes the section, “Briefing” from which the readers come to know about different important international issues that have occurred in the previous week. After “Briefing” is the “Sketches” section where an interview of a celebrity or a prominent personality is published. Following that is the Cover story and other feature stories under different headings like crime, city, agriculture, sports etc.

After the feature stories there are two sections named “Readings” and



Figure 4: “Art” New Age Xtra (*The New Age* 09 April 2010)

“Art.” The last two sections are called “On the Line” and “The Digest”. Under the section “On the Line,” an expert of a relevant field is interviewed about an on going social, political or cultural issue of the country. And in the section “The Digest,”



Figure 5: “Digest” readers enjoy amusing incidents illustrated through cartoons that

New Age Xtra (*The New Age* 09 April 2010.)

have occurred around the world. *New Age Xtra*’s purpose is to give the readers variety of news with authentic information so that readers can decide by themselves what is right or wrong.

4. Working at New Age Xtra:

4.1: Profile Features: Sketches

As I was a beginner, my editor advised me to start writing profile features, conveniently termed “Sketches” at *The New Age Xtra*. He suggested a thorough reading of previously published “Sketches” to figure out the form and function of the articles I was about to compose. Having read the previous issues of “Sketches,” I noticed that it solely deals with show-biz celebrities and famous personalities of different professions of the country. After I understood the essence of it, my editor also explained about profile in detail. He said, “When you are interviewing someone for a profile, focus on the person’s likings, his /her memorable incidents and future plans along with professional life.”

Profiles can be separated into two types:

“(a) of individual people, usually based on interviews which can be: written in the first person, ghosted or reported (third person) edited down from a tape into Q & A in reply to set questions (questionnaire). If the subject is dead, these become obits (written by acquaintance, admirer, enemy, or cobbled together from clippings).

(b) Of two or more people or groups; again these can be from interviews, or clippings assisted. Subject can be companies, pop groups, sports teams, orchestras, university department, clubs, councils” (Adams et al 49).

For profile writing, I mostly interviewed individual people and seldom had a chance to compose the questionnaire, obituary and type b interviews.

It is very important to take a good interview so that one can write a good profile. During my print media course I have learned how to interview people and I have implemented those techniques while interviewing for New Age. So the important factors for an interview are:

“(a)Getting interviews.
 (c) Face to face.
 (e) Getting tough.
 (g) Notes on note taking.
 (i) Hazardous zone.
 (k) Its over.

(b) Doing research.
 (d) Popping the questions.
 (f) Off the records.
 (h) Tape recording.
 (j) Written and phone
 interview
 (l) Pasting it together.”

(Brady N.Pg.)

I will explain these factors from my work experience.

(a)Getting interviews:

Getting interviews is the first step of a good profile which can also be very tricky. In “New Age Xtra,” all feature writers have to attend weekly meeting which takes place on every Saturday. In this meeting the editor discusses everything and assigns jobs for everyone. We also planned ahead for the upcoming week. Usually the editor asked me if I had any name on my mind. Based on my suggestions he decided who can be interviewed. After sealing this decision came the tricky part when I had to call them and had to persuade them to sit for an interview. Here, one of my colleagues taught me that, the timing of making a phone call is very crucial. It is very important as different people have different professions. Directors and actors remain busy in shooting all day so it is better to call them at night but when it comes to music directors and literatures then it should be around noon or evening. Another important thing is, sometimes they might say that they were extremely busy and do not have any time to talk. If a situation like this came up, then they should be given compliments about their works and the editor would not want to interview anyone except him/her. Finally, even if an interview had been fixed with someone, it is always prudent to have a backup plan, because sometimes at the last moment people canceled interviews.

(b)Doing Research:

Doing research is the crux of the interview process. It always helps to ask important questions regarding the person's life. "Research can be fun: gold digging in almanacs, wooing the librarian, getting the goods on your interviewee from his old school teachers. The thrill of discovery, and the thrill of discovery, and the feeling of being truly prepared for an interview is exhilarating" (Brady 36). It even makes the interviewee happy that the interviewer knows the pivotal achievements of his/her life and this help to build rapport with the person. Whenever I went to take an interview I always checked articles published in different newspaper about the person. Because of internet it is not very difficult to skim through different newspapers archives. It also helped to be confident to take interviews as it provided a clear outline of questions.

(c)Face to Face:

Face to face means meeting the interviewee on the scheduled day in person. It "is the time for rapport. For friendly-even if pointed- conversation. Role playing helps" (Brady 49). It is necessary to be on time otherwise it may give a feeling to the interviewee that the interviewer is careless and this can also make the person angry if he/she has cancelled any important work just to give the interview. Moreover, it is also important to behave well because the reputation of the newspaper also remains in the hand of the interviewer. The interviewer has to listen attentively what the interviewee is saying. Even if the interviewee's responses become boring or repetitive, it is the interviewer's duty not to flinch or show any sign of boredom or impatience as at the end of the day, it is the interviewer who has to write all down.

(d)Popping the Questions:

Preparing a questionnaire makes it easy to ask the desired questions one wants to ask. If a questionnaire is written beforehand then there is a very little chance to forget or ask any important question. After doing the background research I always made a questionnaire so that I do not forget to ask any question. A questionnaire's basic format is same for everyone, for example the questionnaire I made was:

- Where did you grow up, hometown, birthday, any fond memory of childhood, schooling, aim in life.
- Family background, parents' occupation, siblings, was it cultural? Did your parents inspire you?
- College, university life, anecdotes.
- How did you enter the industry? What attracted you? How long have you been working in the industry?
- What is your first work? Breakthrough work?
- Awards. What are the current projects that you are working on?
- Who is your role model (inside & outside the country)
- People whose work you admire of recent days.
- What do you like to do at your pastimes?
- How do you manage time for your family?
- Favourite movie/ musicians / books?

Figure 6: Questionnaire for interviewing different personalities.

I made some changes when it comes to their profession. For example, when I interviewed sprinter Naznin Nahar Chumki I had to ask questions like what was the timing of her current track record, if her timing and speed had increased or not. On the other hand when I interviewed actors and directors I had to make questions like, in which drama they were working or planning to direct any film or not etc. Another important thing to keep in mind is, an interviewer should not just go and start asking questions. It is good to start with light

questions like how the person is doing or if it is a shooting spot then what drama it is etc. It is good to show interest in the interviewee's profession.

(e) Getting Tough:

There are things which make the interviewer hesitant to ask. But it is a journalist's duty to ask questions and be professional about it. For example, during interviewing rhymester Lutfor Rahman Riton, I came to know that his parents had abandoned him because of his love marriage and even after all these years they still did not talk. When he was talking about this he got really upset but I had to ask him what actually happened because usually we write about the interviewee's parents.

(f) Off the Records:

Sometimes an interviewee reveals confidential information which may create controversy or can be harmful for the person if it gets published. But they share those information just to make the interviewer understand what they have gone through and tells not to publish it. For example, when I interviewed a renowned rhymester of Bangladesh, he told me how the government had sacked him from his job without any notice while he was working as a cultural diplomat of Bangladesh in Japan. The government did not even give his arrear salary and also made sure that he could not come back to Bangladesh. All this happened because he was very active against the collaborators (Rajakars). Later on, he moved from Japan to Canada and could not come to the country for several years until the caretaker government came to the country in 2006. He said how difficult time was for him and asked not to publish. In another interview, an actor also revealed information about Bangladesh Television by saying how it used to take actors who had money and paid to the producers to cast them. He, himself was a

victim of this. If the names he uttered, got published it might brought trouble to him. He shared those things because he wanted to tell that the path he has gone through is not an easy one to achieve his current position. So there are incidents that interviewees revealed off the record. Here I would also like to mention about “Code of Ethics” which I was taught in my print media class. According to society of professional journalists, “ethical journalist treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving respect.” As they requested me not to publish so I had to keep the request.

(g) Notes on Note Taking:

Note taking is very helpful when one starts writing the profile. If important points are noted then it becomes easy to remember and sometimes the interviewer does not even need to listen to a whole recorded conversation. The spelling of the interviewee’s name or the name of his family members name should also be asked and written in front of the interviewees so that later they cannot complain about wrong spelling. However, an interviewer should not only give all the attention to note taking. It is also important to make eye-contact with the interviewee. Otherwise it shows that interviewer is not confident and not interested to talk to the interviewee.

(h) Tape Recording:

Tape recorder can be considered as an interviewer’s best friend. It is not possible to remember a whole interview and specially for the beginners a tape recorder is a must. When it comes to writing if I found out that I have confusion about something then I can check it by listening to the recording. Recording is also important for another reason which is, if someone says

anything during the interview and denied his/her after it gets published, denied that he/she has not said anything like this and then the recording can be used as an evidence of what the person has said in reality.

(i) Hazardous Zone:

It may happen that for some reason that the interviewee is upset or irritated for some reason. And at that time the interviewer should be patient. For example, when I was interviewing actress Dilara Zaman, she was really eager to talk. But because of one of her co-actors who came late at the shooting spot and even after coming was giving everyone a rush to complete the shoot so that he could leave, she could not talk to me as conveniently she wanted and was really annoyed.

(j) Written and Phone Interview:

During my internship I did not have to take any written interviews. But I had to do phone interviews because in a short time I had to cover BPC FM Radio Award 2010 and for that I had to interview five radio jockeys over phone. In a phone interview people really talk fast and it is hard to take notes. If it is a face to face interview then the interviewee sees the writing speed of the interviewer and talks according to that. But in a phone interview there is no scope of that. It is better to call from a phone which has a recording system.

(k) It's Over:

“Bringing the interview to an artful close is an art itself” (Brady 182). To end an interview I used to ask questions about the person’s future plans. Everybody dreams of to do something good in the future so ending an interview by asking about their future plans made them happy and gave the readers a glimpse of the future activities of the celebrities.

(l) Pasting It Together:

After the interview part comes the writing part. In the article “Crafting the Perfect profile,” John Rains said, “However you choose to structure a profile, try for a high-octane beginning. With a profile, perhaps more than with many other kinds of stories, we need to give readers a reason to stay with us.” I always tried to begin the profile with an interesting anecdote from the person’s life so that readers get interested to know what happened next. And then talked about his/her childhood and what they actually wanted to be and how they came to the profession they are now.

In the next page I have shown a profile of sprinter Shamsun Nahar Chumki whom I have interviewed. Some of the published interviews taken by me are given in the appendices section (See Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4)

Sprinting ahead

The fastest lady in Bangladesh, Shamsun Nahar Chumki, tells **Nusrat Hossain** about her success, her future plans and her phobia.



Photo by Al-Emrun Garjon

Shamsun Nahar Chumki's sweet and simple girl-next-door nature can deceive anybody. However, underneath this serene exterior lies the athletic demeanour of Bangladesh's fastest sprinter.

Chumki is currently residing in the training camp of the National Sports Council of Bangladesh, while preparing for the upcoming Commonwealth Games. Her utmost priority at the moment is to perform to her best at the summer meet that begins next month. 'Only if I perform the best in the meet will I be selected for the Commonwealth Games. I'm focusing my all on the tournament where I'm determined to sustain my prevailing record of 12.10 seconds,' she says.

Born and brought up in Noakhali, coming to athletics was not very hard for Chumki as her family was very supportive of her. 'My elder brother Rezaul Karim Riaz had an inclination towards sports and used to play football. He is the one who inspired me through the instances of Nazmun Nahar Beauty, saying just like everybody knows her, someday people will recognise you too, if you play as well as her,' she shares with Xtra. 'Even my father, Shamsul Alam, and mother, never said anything against my interest in sports,' says Chumki. 'In fact, my father is so obsessive about sports that he is very happy that I've taken it up seriously,' adds Chumki, with a smile.

Chumki says that her journey in athletics began ever since her first sprint as a student of Class 6. 'I always participated in the annual sports competition of our school, MA Rashid Girls High School. As I always came first, my brother asked me to participate in the inter-district competition, where I came first in the 100-meter sprint,' she says.

Figure 6: "Sprinting Ahead" New Age Xtra, (*The New Age*, 09 July 2010)

‘Although I was a bit scared at the time, the selector, Rahim sir, assured me to give it a try at least. It’s a good thing I considered his suggestion,’ says Chumki.

Taking this further, Chumki came third after participating in the National Junior Competition in 1999. In 2000, she grabbed the first prize for 100 and 200-meter junior meet.

Following this, Chumki took part in a three month training programme before getting the coveted call-up from the national athletics team. ‘The feeling cannot be described in words; this is something you have to feel,’ she says, when asked how she felt after being called up by the national athletics team.

She gives all the credit to her coach Rafiqullah Akhter Milon for the call. ‘He is the one who trained me for the competitions,’ says Chumki.

Chumki shares the difficulties she faces while being a sprinter. ‘I was always teased by people. In a place like Noakhali, it is not easy to go out for practise in a track suit and return after dark. There were guys who used to make awful remarks. However, this did not stop me and the situation is much better now,’ she says.

Remembering her early days, Chumki shares an interesting story with Xtra. ‘On an Eid day, my brother was listening to music at a high volume. When he did not lower the volume even when I asked him to, I switched off the music system. This infuriated him and he slapped me. My father who witnessed the incident, rushed over to my brother and began to beat him till he was unconscious. Although the scene is rather harsh, for some reason I was laughing when it happened and we all share a good laugh when we remember the incident to this day,’ she says. However, the journey has not been too smooth for the fastest lady in Bangladesh. Chumki suffered a hamstring injury that sidelined her for three years and therefore, could not participate in any competition. ‘I still did not lose my confidence,’ she says.

‘My best friend and cricketer Reshma Akhter and Kitab Ali, former coach of national athletics, have encouraged me a lot to train myself again,’ she says. She eventually regained her first position after seven years with the timing of 12.00 seconds at the Walton 35th National Athletics Tournament.

As Chumki shares, she also has a fear of ghosts. ‘I know that ghosts don’t exist but I always get very scared when listening to ghost stories,’ laughs Chumki.

Chumki loves to spend her spare time with her daughter Samia Hossain Richi. Apart from that, she loves to listen to music and watch television. ‘Sonu Nigam, Adnan Sami and Konok Chapa are some of my favourite musicians,’ she says.

Chumki’s favourite sprinters are Marion Jones and Morris Green. ‘I got a chance to see them during a competition. I was extremely surprised to realise that both of them are so humble,’ she says.

Chumki wants to continue to perform for the next 10 years. ‘I’m determined about this. I also have a latent wish of becoming a coach. But for that I would need lots of training,’ she concludes.

4.2. Up Close and Personal

Though I was doing my internship at the weekend magazine *New Age Xtra*, but I also had to do a mini interview called up close and personal for the lifestyle magazine of The New Age named *Trends*. Basically what I had to do was, interview the same person selected for *Sketches* with a set questionnaire. The questionnaire was same for everyone and as it was a mini interview, the answers were short and revealed interesting sides of the interviewees.

Dilara Zaman

The acclaimed television, film and theatre actor talks about her fear of accidents, her three grandchildren and affinity towards Bangladeshi food

Interviewed by **Nusrat Hossain**



Photo by Al-Emrun Garjon

When are you the happiest?

When I hear any good news regarding my daughters

What is your greatest fear?

Dying from an accident

Who do you most admire?

Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi

I trust people easily

Figure 7: "Dilara Zaman" Trends, (*The New Age* 20 July 2010)

**What's the trait you most deplore
in yourself?**

I trust people easily

**What or who is the greatest love
of your life?**

My three grand children

**What has been your biggest
disappointment?**

I don't have any

When did you last cry and why?

Can't remember

Your favourite food...

Bangladeshi cuisine like rice and fish

What's the trait you most deplore in others?

Lying and hypocrisy

Tell us a secret...

I want to do something for people that will be remembered for a long time

**Who would you like to invite to
your dream dinner party?**

I don't have any desire for a dream dinner party

Food you dislike most...

No particular dislike for any food

Your birth date...

June 19

5. Event Covering:

Covering events for *New Age Xtra* was really a learning experience for me because though I learned how to write features in my print media course but I did not have to do anything like attending an award ceremony or festival. As my internship was only for three months, I only had chance to cover two events.

The first event was BPC FM Radio Award 2010 and I wrote a feature named “Recognising hard work.” I was told from my editor to interview some of the RJ’s of different radio stations so that I could use the necessary answers as quotations. I could easily relate myself to the event as I was a regular listener of FM radio stations. On the scheduled day I attended the award ceremony and took notes on who had become the best RJ, which radio station had been awarded as the best radio station and the reaction of the winning RJs. When I had to write the feature first I had to write a little bit about the journey of FM radio in Bangladesh and the profession of an RJ. I used some relevant quotes from my interviews while describing their profession and also about how they were feeling about getting recognised by The BPC FM Radio Award 2010. And in later paragraphs I talked about the award night and used the reactions of the winning RJs.

The second event was BRAC University’s first ever inter university youth festival. As my editor told me to write a 500 words article which is about one page, I did not have to interview many people. And the press release of the program also helped a lot.

In the following page I have shown one of my features which was published:

Recognising hard work

Nusrat Hossain finds out how radio jockeys, through their creative communication with audiences, have made FM radios a staple diet within four years of the commencement of its journey



photo by **Prito Reza**

The culture of listening to music, news and interactive programmes on the radio, once thought of as completely lost thanks to competition from television and the internet, has found a new lease of life.

Interactive programmes aired on FM radio stations such as Radio Foorti, Radio Today, Radio Amar and ABC have added a new dimension to radio entertainment.

Thanks to these programmes, new concepts and most importantly the radio jockeys, radio has become a part of people's life as much as the morning coffee or the ride to work. Though FM Radios have been immensely popular in a number of countries for many years, it is quite different in Bangladesh. FM radios here are still at its infancy, aging only four years, but within this short span they have substantially succeeded in reaching the hearts of people from all walks of life.

The effervescent radio jockeys are the soul of radio stations for they have been prolific at interacting with audiences through the use of wit and humour in their conversation. For many, they have become friends who reach out to help the callers with their suggestions. From playing song requests to solving personal problems, while also divulging their own pangs and issues, RJs have developed an immense fan following.

'In the last four years I have taken break from office for only 48 hours,' says RJ Neerob, who has even worked during the Eid, Pooja and other special occasions. 'I even did a show till 3.00am, when the next day I had my honours examination,' remembers RJ Neerob, one of the most admired radio jockeys in Bangladesh. He also shares that his work has become his whole world. 'At the end of the day, it is your hard work through which you build your identity,' believes Neerob.

Most of the RJs are still students and in spite of that, they dedicate a huge amount of their time to the love of their listeners. RJ Kaynat who is studying at Dhaka City College maintains a very busy schedule with her studies and work. Hence, the woman in her 20s hardly has much time to spare for her family. 'My mother always says I find my daughter on-air. And I stay so busy that I only get to meet my father on weekends. Nonetheless, I cannot leave the job. It has become an addiction for me. If I do not have a show on some day, it feels like something is missing,' quips Kaynat.

For RJ Farhana who has been working at Bangladesh Betar as well as Radio Today, the situation is different. She believes that if you know how to manage time you can do everything you want. For her, the whole experience is a magical journey. 'When I enter the on-air room, put on my headphone and start talking to my listeners, it is a feeling full of enigma. The whole world just stops right out of that room while I am on-air. It is just me and my listeners that are important to me during my show.'

Through their passion, enthusiasm, excitement, these people have committed themselves to their work. But till now, not many initiatives have been taken to give them recognition for their diligence. To fill the void, Business Project Consultants (BPC) recently took an initiative to award RJs and the radio stations.

On that note, RJ Farhana says, 'it is an excellent initiative. People, who are working so hard day and night, are being finally recognised for their work. When you see a one-hour drama, the time duration is one hour for the audience, but the hard work behind it exceeds scores of hours. People should at least understand what it really needs, to be in the shoes of an RJ.'

On May 28, at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, at a colourful ceremony, BPC FM Radio Award 2010 were handed out. The chief guest at the programme was state minister for law, Advocate Md Quamrul Islam. RJ Kaynat of Radio Amar who won the BPC best RJ Female Award 2010 says, 'just a few days back, someone told me that radio is not even a media and I was so shocked that I could not even come up with an answer.'

'If we are not a media then how come we are still going so strong? We need many more recognitions like this, so that no one could point a finger at us. I am also hopeful that someday, the whole of Bangladesh will appreciate our work,' she added.

Like Kaynat, Rajib Sarkar, producer and RJ of Radio Amar, iterates this message full of vigour and emotion, after getting the Best Personality Award of radio. 'People have talked rubbish about us for a long time but this award has proven our ability, and in the future we will keep proving it'.

Rajib, who is mostly known as Love Guru, also got the Best Producer Award. Furthermore, Radio Amar got the Best Radio Award and U-Turn of Radio Today got the Best Dual Programme Award. One of the most popular programmes on FM Radio, 'Amar Valobasha' got the Best Programme Award and also the Best Reality Programme on radio.

RJ Raju, who won the BPC best RJ Award Male 2010, is happy that at least someone has taken an initiative to recognise them. 'I am happy that at least someone has started it and I hope in future there will be more initiatives like this'.

6. Working for a Cover Story:

During the third week of my internship two big incidents happened in Dhaka within the span of three days. A building collapsed in Begunbari on 01 June and on 03 June a fire broke out in old town and killed 117 people. My editor told me to do a feature on the building collapse along with one of my colleagues. As it was a cover story and a very serious issue, the responsibility was much more than my previous assignments. Generally for features we were told to interview atleast five experts along with human stories of the spot. So we talked to so many experts like architects, professors and the chairman of Rajuk himself about the reason of building collapse. Following is the cover story that I worked for:

Frightening times

Mohiuddin Alamgir and **Nusrat Hossain** investigate the alarming trend of buildings starting to tilt or collapse and speak to experts regarding the possible reasons behind the mishaps as well as ways to remedy the situation.

Babul a rickshaw-puller, sitting on a tea stall at the East Begunbari area, is suffering from anxiety and fear. And one could argue that his apprehension is justified. A resident of a five-storied tin shed structure in the area since 1994, as recently as the first day of June, he witnessed the collapse of a building in the industrial area, claiming at least 25 lives in the process.

Shortly afterwards, word had spread about another building in the same area, along with one in Nakhalpara and Gendaria being susceptible to a similar fate, having started tilting to one side. The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) was swift to act upon the situation, taking steps to demolish both the buildings. Rajuk has identified 30 buildings of the area being illegally constructed.

Among these buildings is the one in which Babul resides.

'We are passing our days in the fear that our building can collapse at any time,' said Babul.

Like Babul, panic has firmly beset the minds of people in the city as reports of collapsing or slanted buildings, with cracks emerging on others, seemingly surfacing every other day during the first couple of weeks of this month.

It has been widely speculated that the base upon which the foundation for most of these vulnerable buildings were laid, had been water bodies that were artificially filled with soil. In many cases, construction of such buildings had been conducted with disregard to the supervision of engineers and architects, but purely and dangerously relying on the expertise of construction workers.

According to experts, the use low quality building materials and execution of construction work in defiance of the approved plan are the primary reasons behind the collapses. Others have also cited the extraction of ground water using deep tube wells as reducing the moisture from the soil, thus making for susceptible bases.



photo by Prito Reza

Rajuk has also failed to monitor the development of such structures due to its lack of manpower and the purported corruption it is riddled with has worsened the situation, alleged experts.

A four-storied building owned by Zafar Iqbal Dalim of 18/B Begunbari began to lean on one side before falling over on shanties in Begunbari on June 1. Rajuk has filed a case against the building's owner.

According to locals and Rajuk officials, the under-strength building was built without the approval of the city development authorities. Locals said it was not constructed in compliance with the building code and its inadequate foundation hardly had any 'piling'.

Until 2001 it was three-storied and later, another floor was added to it. The construction of the top floor was completed just a week ago, the building that stood on only four columns started tilting to one side at about 10:30pm on May 31, the night before bundling over completely at 10:45pm, said locals.

Figure 9: "Frightening Times" New Age Xtra, (*The New Age* 18 June 2010)

‘Most of the buildings in the Begunbari area have been illegally erected as they have been built on Khas lands, or acquired lands which were actually a part of Hatirjheel,’ said Nurul Huda, chairman of Rajuk. Before the incident could even begin to fade out of the collective memory of residents of the area, they were instead left panic-struck as another building, about 500 metres away from the site of the original mishap, was rapidly evicted on June 4 as it began tilting to one side. Sirajul Islam, the owner of the building, at 46/1/A, Begunbari was arrested by police on the charge of constructing an unauthorised building.

According to Yasir Ahmed, son of Sirajul Islam, the building was constructed in 2006, primarily planned to be a three-storied building but in 2007, four further stories were added to it.

He admitted that the building complied with no approved plan and most of the buildings in the area were constructed in a similar vein.

‘As the area falls in the flood flow zone, Rajuk do not approve of any structures here and most of the buildings here have been illegally built,’ Yasir told Xtra.

When he was asked about why they had constructed a building without the approval, he kept silent.

Most of the buildings, including a number of tin shed structures were constructed in the early 1990s. Although it is an industrial area, influential people exercising their power, started to construct buildings in the area, according to locals.

During the same week as the Begunbari frights, another couple of buildings, one in east Nakhalpara and the other in KB Road, Gendaria, started to incline horizontally while cracks started appearing on a 19-storied Concord Grand building in Shantinagar.

The latter structure however, was subsequently declared safe by experts while the demolition job on the other two structures soon went underway, initiated by Rajuk and building owners.

‘Most of the structures that have collapsed or are tilting have been constructed without a plan. The building which fell in Begunbari was built illegally while some others were built without even consulting an engineer,’ says Mubasshar Hussain, president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh.

He also pointed to the lax monitoring by authorities concerned and the unplanned urbanisation that has led to unauthorised buildings and structures mushrooming in the city, while risking the lives of its residents.

According to the Dhaka City Corporation, there are about 230,000 households in the city while a study report of the Comprehensive over 3,20,000 buildings in the capital.

According to the Mubasshar, most of the developers and building owners use cheap, low quality raw materials for constructing buildings to reduce costs. Thus, the likelihood of a building falling in a heap is naturally high.

‘Rods made from melted cans of Dano are also used to construct buildings,’ he said. He also pointed out that in Bangladesh, there is no method of testing the grades and quality of rods.

‘Profit-oriented developers have filled a number of water bodies around the Dhaka, to build their structures which only increase the chance of adversities,’ he added.

Apart from using low quality materials, building owners and developers frequently violated the building codes of the city. Some of the experts and Rajuk officials claimed that about 90 per cent of buildings in Dhaka have somehow deviated from its approved plan of construction.

‘Around 70 per cent of these buildings have violated construction rules among which, 30 per cent are in breach of major rules,’ said Mubasshar. Rajuk officials and Professor Sarwar Jahan, chairman of Urban and Regional Planning of Bangladesh University Engineering and Technology (BUET) echoed these views.

Rajuk officials, however, failed to provide a definite number of illegal and vulnerable buildings in the city. ‘We don’t know how many buildings are illegal but one of our teams is working on it,’ said Khondker Salahuddin, chief engineer of Rajuk.

However, according to Nurul Huda, Rajuk identified some 5,000 vulnerable buildings which were built in deviation of the designs and plans approved by Rajuk, mainly beside the main roads of the city.

Rajuk’s lone executive magistrate, Rokon-ud-Dowla, however informed Xtra that during his drive against illegal buildings in the city, he found that at least 90 per cent of buildings had deviated from its original plan.

Mubasshar along with Iqbal Habib, urban planner and joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan, Rajuk’s executive magistrate Rokon-ud-Dowla, and other experts, believe that such departures from the approved plans is commonplace now.

‘In most of cases, building owners, make mention of a plan for instance, to construct a five-storied structure but as soon as it receives approval, he

goes on to implement additional floors,’ said Iqbal Habib.

Urban planners like Habib and Mubasshar consider the use of deep tube wells to extract ground water as a threat to the quality of soil, as its moisture is said to erode in the process.

‘A pipe of a tube well has to go 350 meters under the ground. What happens then is that the layers of the ground below become hollow and the soil becomes vulnerable. For this reason, the foundations of buildings may not be as solid as would be desirable,’ explains Iqbal.

According to experts, there are 554 deep tube wells run by the government, 1500 private-run along with 1000 illegal ones in city. These supply about 74 per cent of the drinking water in the city.

However, Professor Aftab Alam Khan, a faculty member of the department of Geology of Dhaka University, differs from the above explanation regarding tube wells.

‘Citing deep tube wells as a reason behind the collapse of buildings is an unscientific explanation.’

He contended that all the cases of collapsing buildings, including the one in Begunbari, the Spectrum Sweater Factory in 2006, along with the Phoenix Garments Factory in 2007, all disintegrated as they had been constructed over artificially filled spots.

‘All the buildings were constructed without there being any proper soil tests conducted or sight investigations and pilings and there are many in the city that have been similarly built which may well eventually disintegrate,’ he added.

Experts also point out that various buildings which would not normally receive approval for construction had been built with the assistance of corrupt Rajuk officials.

Building codes such as the Bangladesh National Building Code and Building Construction Rule are frequently flouted by the Dhaka city developers and private building owners.

‘Violating the law has become a norm in the country it seems as only a handful of builders actually comply with the building codes,’ said Sarwar.

Most experts claimed that Dhaka’s growth had taken form in an unplanned manner. Planning is an important issue for the proper maintenance, monitoring and supervision of a city.

However, Amanat Ullah Khan, a professor of the department of Geography and Environment at the Dhaka University has a different take on the issue. He believes that plans regarding the growth of the city had long been in place.

‘First, there was the Town Planning of Dhaka by professor P Geddes in 1917, followed by the first Master Plan of Dhaka which was prepared in 1959 by a British firm, Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane under the technical cooperation of the Colombo International Plan Scheme, the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan 1995-2015 as well as some others but the problem lay with the execution of these plans,’ he explained. The Master Plan 1959 in general, outlined a broad planning principle and zoned the urban area for different purposes. Although, the Plan was prepared to be implemented over a period of 20 years (1959-79), it lasted for almost double that time until a new plan in 1995 had been formulated. Accordingly, the planned residential areas like Gulshan and Dhanmondi as well as the Tejgaon industrial zone were identified.

the development of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan 1995-2015, a project titled ‘Preparation of Structure Plan, Master Plan, and Detailed Area Plan For (DAP)-Metropolitan Development and Plans Preparation and Management in Dhaka’ has been adopted.

Experts said that delay in making the city’s detailed area plan, better known as DAP, has allowed unplanned urbanisation in the city to flourish. Though the DAP project was initiated in 1994, being prepared keeping in perspective the city of Dhaka in 2015, it is yet to see the light of day. The proposed DAP has been stuck in the ministry for approval for the last eight months.

When Nurul was asked why Rajuk, which is supposed to regulate the development of structures in the city, has failed to control erection of illegal buildings, he blamed the shortage of manpower and logistics for such failures. ‘Rajuk’s area of jurisdiction is 590 kilometers and we do not have enough manpower to keep track of the hundreds of buildings erected across the city,’ he said. Rajuk now has only four authorised officers against the need of 20 and only one magistrate against the need of 10 magistrates.

Rajuk, however, had submitted an organogram to the ministry over two months ago, asking for an additional 2,000 employees, including 16 authorised officers and eight executive magistrates. Nurul also informed, with due respect to the court, that when Rajuk tries to take measures against illegal or plan-deviated buildings, injunctions from the court eventually hinders the government organisation from taking necessary actions against these buildings.

‘For example, only in Begunbari, there are 72 injunctions against Rajuk which is not letting us take necessary actions against the illegal and vulnerable buildings,’ he said.

Following the recent incidents of tilting and collapsing buildings, five teams designated by Rajuk are working to make a complete list of illegal and unplanned buildings as well as those that have deviated from its approved plans. The teams are expected to submit their reports on the last week of June.

According to Rajuk, in the last two months, at least 50 buildings in Gulistan, Uttara, Kuril and Hathirjheel area of the city, had been demolished.

Urban experts have also termed Rajuk an ineffective organisation and said successive governments and influential quarters of society have turned it ineffective over the years.

Amanat and Sarwar believe that involving local communities into the monitoring and investigation of buildings in the city may help change the scenario.

‘Political sincerity is imperative to address this particular issue which we are yet to evidence, as the lack of mention at the new budget regarding the development of the city, in spite of the accidents that have occurred, indicates,’ concluded Amanat Ullah.

Building on poor blocks

- Most of the structures that have collapsed or are tilting have been constructed without a plan and built on water bodies that were artificially filled with soil: experts

- Around 70 per cent of buildings in Dhaka have violated construction rules among which, 30 per cent are in breach of major rules: experts

- At least 90 per cent of buildings had deviated from its original plan: Rokon-ud-Dowla

- The use of low quality building materials a reason behind the collapses: experts

- Many of the building were constructed with the supervision of construction workers, instead of engineers or architects: experts

- Rajuk fails to monitor due to lack of manpower and corruption: experts.

7. Challenges I Faced:

Meeting new people, interviewing them, being a part of their journey by writing different personalities profiles was a learning experience for me but there are pros and cons of everything. So there were some problems that I had to face during some interviews and even for getting permission to interview some people.

There were renowned personalities who also worked as columnists of different newspapers or were related with TV channels whom I wanted to interview. But what I did not know was that generally people related with other newspapers and TV channels cannot be interviewed. For example, I wanted to interview actor “Y” but I did not get permission because he is an MP of the ruling party and also related to a TV Channel. I was very keen to interview him because of his remarkable acting career but when things like politics were dragged between professional work, it was really disappointing for me.

On the other hand, there were celebrities who only talk to specific newspapers. Once I called an actress who said that she does not give interviews and also yelled at me without any reason by saying that journalists only publish gossips so why would she gave an interview. As I was new and had no idea how to react on a situation like this I could not say anything to her. Later when I discussed the incident with one of my senior colleagues he said that this is a very common incident that people refuse to give interviews but later you will find out that they have given interviews to another newspaper. It was better not to take whatever they had said to heart.

Moreover, shooting spots were really unpredictable. As my first few shooting spot interview experiences were really good, I had no idea that there were shooting spots too where people can misbehave without any reason. When I went to interview actress Dilara Zaman, there were two actors who consistently started asking me about New Age's circulation even though I politely replied that I had only started working and New Age's circulation department could say the appropriate number. They did not pay heed to what I said and kept nagging me and one of them also said, "Though you are working at New Age, you must be keeping newspaper "X" at your home." The remark he made was really unexpected for me that he was taking it for granted that I kept the newspaper he had mentioned and when I said that I do keep New Age at home, it became a surprising answer for him and he gave me an angry expression.

In another shooting spot, an actress was supposed to give me interview. As I went there, I saw she was very busy and said I have to wait for a long time. It was already 5 PM. and the shooting spot was in Uttara. So staying there till night was not possible. Moreover, what happened was the director, actor and even my interviewee misbehaved with me and the photo journalist by making awful remarks. The director also made remarks about New Age's chief editor. It was really insulting and later I informed the incident to my office. They were really angry and said I do not have to write that actress's profile and they also decided not to publish any news of that actress and the director. In addition, what I came to know was that this kind of incident had happened before with female journalists.

What I was told from my office was, whenever anything happened like that, I should immediately call the editor, inform him what has happened and leave the place. Though there were such problems I had to face, I could not have learnt the solutions if those problems had not

arisen. And the solutions are going to help me for my future work as now I know how I have to handle situations like these.

8. A Personal Account:

The 12 weeks I had spent at the *New Age Xtra* was really a rich experience for me. I had learnt a lot of things from my colleagues. Whenever they were discussing any issue, they always encouraged me to take part in the conversation. Though I was an intern but it was mandatory for me to attend the weekly meetings. I was treated like a member of the *Xtra* team rather than an intern. The editor always asked about my ideas so that I could develop them to feature stories. If I could not then he also explained what were the problems with the ideas. I also found out, for story ideas, reading the editorial of different newspapers is very helpful.

Besides, deadline is another important thing in print media. If the features are not submitted within the submission day that could really brought trouble for the magazine. So I also had to keep in mind when was the deadline and my editor also used to give me reminders that how much my work had progressed.

Appreciation of my work from my colleagues and even interviewees had made me determined to work harder for the next assignment. And when I thought about taking my first interview and the last interview I could see the differences easily because for the last interview I could ask questions without a questionnaire, I could take important notes and could write the profile on the basis of that. For my first interview I could not even imagine of interviewing without a set questionnaire.

9. Conclusion:

My 12 weeks experience of internship at *New Age Xtra* has given me a practical view of a newspaper's office and though the time was short but I have experienced the pressure journalists go through, to some extent and I have also learnt how to cope with the pressure.

Meeting renowned personalities every week, interviewing them and writing their profile is not an opportunity that everyone gets. I feel really lucky that although I was an intern but I also had responsibilities like my other colleagues to meet deadlines, suggesting new ideas to the meetings. It has developed me to be more disciplined and punctual in personal life as well. Moreover, the people I interviewed were so down to earth and shared their story with so much enthusiasm that it was really fun to interviewing them. One thing I would like to mention is, because of word limit which is 800-850 for a profile feature, it is not possible to publish everything the interviewee has said. There are many things they have shared which may not as important to publish. But their experience has enhanced my knowledge and I have also developed as a person by seeing their behavior and respect for other people.

Apart from my work experience, the time I had spent with *New Age Xtra* team was really amazing. My colleagues never let me feel that I was new among them and whenever I had any problem to understand anything they always helped me with that. Finally, the experience I have gained through my internship at *New Age Xtra* is going to help me to do better as a journalist in the long run.

Works Cited

Brady, John. *The Craft of Interviewing*. New York: A vintage books, A division of Random House, 1977. Print.

Hicks, Wynford, Sally Adams and Harriet Gilbert. *Writing for Journalists*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Rains, John. "Crafting the Perfect Profile." *Writing-World.com*. 2004. Web. 29 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.writing-world.com/freelance/rainsprofile.shtml>>

"Code of Ethics" SPJ Society of Professional Journalists 2010. Web. 29 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>>

Appendices:

Appendix 1:

Encompassing all arts

Nusrat Hossain finds out the different sides of a prolific director Animesh Aich - an actor, painter, writer, a bookworm and movie buff.



As I enter the shooting location in Uttara, I see a young man wearing an ash coloured T-shirt and trousers, lying on a sofa, writing a script. As soon as he sees this correspondent, he stands up to greet me cordially on the set of his first and on-going drama serial 'Manush Bodol'.

The man is none other than Animesh Aich, one of the most revered young directors in Bangladesh today. He first drew public attention with the drama Kufa, which he wrote and directed, and which also earned him Meril Prothom Alo Critics Award. It took him no time to establish himself by directing dramas and telefilms such as Gorom Bhaat Othoba Nichhok Bhuter Golpo, Raater Golpo, Tumi Amar Maa, Nodir Naam Nayantara, Brihonnola.

Born and raised in Dhaka, Animesh is the second of three brothers. His service-holder father and housewife mother never restrained their son from doing anything he liked. 'I was never a bad student and the good part of my parents was, if I could finish my study in time, I got the license to do the things I liked,' says Animesh. During his early days, his parents brought him numerous books and always encouraged him to indulge in reading. However, it was his paternal cousin Alok Bose, who ignited the interest in Animesh towards creative activities. Bose was involved in writing poems and theatrical groups like 'Aranyak' and 'Udichi'. Animesh and his cousins also arranged cultural functions in their locality and performed in dramas during their school days.

Figure 1: "Encompassing all arts" New Age Xtra (*The New Age*, 28 May 2010)

Animesh had an inclination towards visual arts since childhood. 'Whenever I got a newspaper I tried to copy drawings from that. You know how children have a liking for somethings. I loved drawing,' shares Animesh. After passing his SSC from Science Laboratory School and HSC from University Laboratory School and College, Animesh and his mother agreed that he should get admitted to the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University. 'My father at first did not like the decision because, as you can guess, most of the people did not have any clear perception about the institute at all'.

During his studies at the institute, Animesh joined the theatrical group 'Prachyanat' and later formed an organisation called 'Jalchhab' along with Nurul Alam Atique, Amitav Reza, Giasuddin Selim, Samir Ahmed, Tarek Shahriar and Mostofa Sarwar Farooki. These young people thought and planned to make cinemas. Later Animesh worked with Nurul Alam Atique as an art director and when his other friends started making dramas, he also gave it a good thought and decided to move in that direction. Though Animesh has directed a number of appreciable dramas for television, cinema has always been his first love. 'I have always wanted to make cinemas. People will not recollect a drama 20 years from now, but a cinema can touch millions of hearts and at present, we are in need of good work in our cinema arena,' he says.

When it comes to selecting scripts, Animesh resorts to his own pen and ink to jot down his own stories. 'If I am reading a story or a poem and find that it can be adapted, then I like to work on it. Or I take any special incident that has touched me. Sometimes I even get inspired by any line from a poem and write script on that'.

As a director, Animesh believes that casting is pivotal. 'If you cast the right people for your characters, 50 per cent of the work can be considered done.' There is also a matter of comfort level. The chemistry between the actor and the director is also very essential for this kind of work, Animesh points out.

When asked about problems he supposedly faces in handling famous artists, Animesh answers with a smile and adds, 'I consider my actors as close confidantes. The mutual understanding among us is great. So till now, I have not faced any major problem.'

Animesh has also acted, though he does not see himself doing it on a regular basis. On that note he shares, 'directors put a lid on actors with a word, but the ones performing it also have feelings about it. So I wanted to experience that very feeling.' Animesh will also be seen in a digital format film titled 'Runaway'.

At present, Animesh is busy with Nasiruddin Yousuff's upcoming film, 'Guerilla' where he is working as a production designer. He is also preparing for his own film and has no plans to direct any drama right now. He and his friends have also opened an organisation called Gadhar Pal, an open forum for creative artists.

Apart from the director's identity, Animesh is a bookworm and a movie buff and loves to paint and write. Shahidul Zahir, Satyajit Ray, Quentin Tarantino, Alfred Hitchcock, Hrithik Roshan, Tapan Sinha are some of his favourite writers and directors. Animesh spends his spare time with his wife Deepanwita. He also has six dogs whom he affectionately calls Potla, Jojo, Megho, Konka, Chonda and Heeramoti.

Appendix 2:

Memoirs of the veteran

Probir Mitro, the passionate and experienced film actor, shares his dearest memories and gnawing worries with **Nusrat Hossain**.

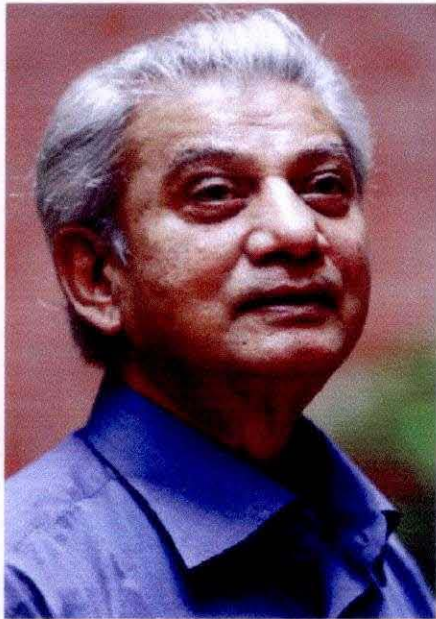


Photo by Prito Reza

Acting was probably the last thing on his mind as a teenager. The captain of the entire school's sports club was definitely more interested in sports. However, Probir Mitro, has been working in the film industry for 42 years now, having acted in over 300 films, during this time. 'One day in my school, there was a selection going on for Rabindranath's drama, *Dakghar*. Our headmaster asked all who were interested to act to express their interest. Having heard this, a few of my friends and I decided to go just for fun,' says Probir, while sharing his memory about his first acting gig. 'I never had the slightest idea that I would end up acting. As I was the captain of the school's sports club, my attendance at the gathering surprised the headmaster. Almost speechless, all I could say was, "I want to act, Sir",' adds Probir. Later, Probir got the chance to play the character of the Prohori in the play.

Figure 2: "Memories of a veteran" New Age Xtra, (*The New Age* 13 august 2010)

However, during rehearsal, he used to give proxy for other roles of actors who were absent. 'I had so much fun playing the different characters that I fell in love with acting,' he says.

Pursuing this further, he became interested in theatre. Encouraging him, his friends took him to old Dhaka's Laalkuthi, which was the hub of cultural activities at the time. 'Laalkuthi was the learning place for me. I have acted in numerous plays there,' recollects Probir.

At that time, renowned directors and actors like H Akbar, Ejaj Khan, Arun Basu, Nani Das, Shams Irani, Kashem were involved with theatre. Probir believes that his acting skills were sharpened while he was working with these people during his theatre career. 'Seeing my acting, people often asked me to act in films,' he says.

'Director H Akbar, with whom I did a stage play, made his first film titled *Jolchhobi*. He invited me to the shooting as we were very friendly,' says Probir. Going to the shooting spot changed everything for the young actor of the time. 'The person, who was supposed to play the doctor's character, fell ill and H Akbar requested me to play the role and I did. The journey has continued ever since,' says Probir with a smile. 'I'm grateful to theatre because without theatre, my acting would never have been wholesome,' he adds.

However, Probir Mitro has also worked with the prolific director, Ritwik Ghatak, in one of his most acclaimed films, *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam*. 'It was a totally different experience for me and I feel lucky that I got the chance to work with him,' he says. 'You wouldn't believe how much this man knew about every aspect of film making. One day, there was a noise coming out of the camera. Ritwik Da just heard the noise and mentioned to the cameraman Baby Islam, the name of the part in the camera that was damaged. Later, Baby Islam admitted that Ritwik Da was right,' says Probir.

Asked about whether he has ever thought about giving direction a shot, Probir humbly says, 'I never dare to think of giving direction a try just because of Ritwik Ghatak. The depth of his knowledge about filmmaking will always belittle my knowledge and therefore, I will never direct. Now, I am usually shocked to see the pride of some directors, who think they know everything about direction despite their limited knowledge,' he says.

Working for 42 years in the film industry, Probir considers his biggest achievement to be the respect and love that fans have given him. 'Once, I was shooting in Kapasia for a folk film directed by Mustafa Anwar. A young boy used to stare at me always during the shooting. One day, I curiously went to him and asked him what the matter was. He said his father is mentally retarded and, for some reason, he found his father in me. The boy's name was Toroni and since then, I have considered him my eldest son. My wife also accepted him as our son. Now he lives in Bangkok and our bond as father and son remains to this day,' shares Probir.

Probir is very thankful to his wife for all the support she has provided him over the years. They have three sons: Mithun, Nipun, Akash and one daughter, Ripa. Probir spends his spare time with his grandson Shreyan, reads books and watches television. 'In the evening, I go to some known distribution offices near my home for some adda,' he shares.

The current situation of the film industry persistently disappoints this great lover of films and acting. 'You will see a strange tradition in our country. When an actor matures in acting, the film fraternity tags him a senior actor, gradually ceasing to offer roles to him. I am no exception to this as I get fewer films every month. I don't know how long this will continue but I love to believe that someday the situation will get better,' concludes Probir.

The merry rhymester

Lutfar Rahman Riton, the evergreen litterateur, takes **Nusrat Hossain** through a trip down memory lane.



Photo by Al-Emrun Gorjon

Born on April 1, 1960, whenever children's writer, Lutfar Rahman Riton, invites friends to his birthday, they think he is pulling their legs for April fool. 'There is no celebration usually as my friends do not believe me and in a way this is an advantage for me,' laughs Riton.

His parents dreamt of their son becoming an engineer one day as Riton was a very meritorious student of Nawabpur Govt. High School. But Riton's dream was to be an artist or a singer. Eventually he became a renowned rhymester of Bangladesh, who first took up the pen and wrote rhymes against Razakars along with Amirul Islam and together published a book called 'Razakar er Chhora', which was highly appreciated by readers.

In his early days, Riton, having an inclination toward art, singing and recitation, was a member of the renowned children's group, Kochi Kachar Mela, whose director was Rokunuzzaman Khan Dada bhai. 'I noticed stories, rhymes and poems, written by my friends in the group, published alongside my initial drawings in Kochi Kachar Mela page. Seeing their creative writings, I thought if they can write, what stops me from doing the same?' shares Riton.

So later, he handed his rhyme, called Putuler Biye, to Dada bhai and it was published in the newspaper the very next Friday. Riton gives full acknowledgment to Dada bhai for his becoming a rhymester. 'No doubt, if Dada bhai didn't publish that amateurish rhyme of mine, I couldn't be today's Lutfar Rahman Riton,' he adds.

Figure 3: "The merry rhymester" New Age Xtra (*The New Age*, 11 June 2010)

That was 1972 and till 2010, his pen hasn't taken a hike. 'I have not stopped writing rhymes for a single day ever since; even without a paper, I usually rhyme in my head. I am a 24-hour rhymester,' he says. As he had always dreamt of being an artist, after completing his HSC from Dhaka College, Riton applied for admission in Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University (DU). However the director of the Institute rejected his application, citing that he is 'over-qualified' as he has already passed HSC.

'This was really a sad chapter of my life. They opted me out as I was already established as a young rhymester and feared that after admission, I may write rhymes focussing on their internal matters leading to controversy,' says Riton. Giving up on his dream of becoming an artist, he began concentrating on his writing and took admission in DU. After realising that he is quite good at writing, he began contributing to numerous dailies, weekly and monthly magazines. However, he only likes to count his mentionable works as editors of two monthly magazines 'Ashonno', published from Biswa Sahitya Kendra, and 'Chhotoder Kagoj', which he had published himself. 'I still feel very proud that I was the editor of these magazines,' intimates Riton.

When he was asked why he chose to work for children, he answers, 'the world of children is full of fantasy and innocence. As I cannot take their responsibility, I wanted to contribute in their world through my rhymes hoping to leave a mark there through my work. If they get pleasure for even one second by reading any of my rhymes, I'll think that I've succeeded.'

He also points out that as children's writers are the ones mostly neglected in our society, most writers don't find interest to come to this field. 'Less recognition and money are the two major factors hindering writers from contributing to this field,' he says.

Asked about his future plans, Riton says he wants to write rhymes as long as he lives and also plans to publish a daily newspaper for children. 'The daily news paper that I will publish may not have too many pages but it'll be a combination of entertainment and information. Bringing out this newspaper has been a long time dream of mine,' he shares.

Riton is a completely different person when it comes to family. 'I used to have family days during which no one could reach me over phone,' he says, before sharing an interesting story with this correspondent.

'I had a friend at Kochi Kachar Mela who used to save her tiffin money to buy me books. She is the one who gifted me books like Lebu Maamar Shoptokando, Professor Shanku and many more,' he remembers.

This childhood friend is none other than his wife Sharly whom Riton also considers his comrade-in-arms. The happily married couple also has a daughter named Nody, currently a student of mass communication at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

In his spare time, he likes to read books, watch movies and listen to music from varying ranges. 'I believe people should try everything as when you create a periphery about liking things, you'll never be able to learn the difference between good and bad.'

He has been honoured with the Sikandar Abu Zafar Literature Award, Agrani Bank Award, Dhaka University Award and most importantly Bangla Academy Award. But Riton considers awards only as a plus point, not that it is going to change anything. 'Awards did not increase my responsibilities. I would have continued my performance even without these awards,' concludes Riton.

Appendix 4:

The constant learner

Baby Naznin, the prolific singer, writer and volleyball player shares her memories and opinions with **Nusrat Hossain**.



Photo by Prito Reza

She was a complete 'Tomboy' as a child. Due to her mischief, she was usually made to stand on one foot with hands on her ears by her mother while making her an example to her siblings. This naughty Tomboy is none other than the renowned singer Baby Naznin, also known as 'Black Diamond' to her fans. Tremendously busy, this singer recently managed some of her time to speak to Xtra. 'I've just returned from my Europe and America tour and I am extremely busy as I have to complete my work that has accumulated over the past few months,' she says.

Figure 4: "The Constant Learner" New Age Xtra (*The New Age*, 6 August 2010)

Naznin has gifted her fans with popular numbers like 'Kal Sararat', 'Alomelo Batashe', 'Rongdhunu Theke', 'Duchokhe Ghum Ashena', 'Morar Kokile', 'Bondhu Tumi Koi' and others. Although she is known to all as a singer, she is also a volleyball and Hadudu player.

'As a child, being punished was a very usual thing for me. I used to pluck mangoes by throwing pebbles and was always up to some mischief. Naturally, my parents were always worried as I was more into coming up with such ideas than concentrating on studies,'

she laughs. Naznin's first teacher was her father, who was also a flute player. 'Being an incredible flutist, he always taught me to learn everything as I grow up so that people never have the opportunity of criticising me for anything that I did not know,' she shares with Xtra. Interestingly, while learning music, Naznin excelled in Uchchanga Sangeet while also practicing folk songs, Nazrul sangeet and Tagore songs. Due to her singing prowess, Naznin was enlisted as a singer at Rangpur Betar. She also won in the singing category of the 'National Competition for Children', four times in a row.

Naznin was an enlisted artiste of Bangladesh Betar and Television during the mid seventies. She made her debut as a playback singer in 1978 after singing for Ehtesham's film Laagam.

Her first album was released in 1987 and ever since then there was no turning back. Till date, she has produced around 41 albums and sang 2,500 playbacks.

She shares an interesting story when asked whether she ever tried playing the flute. 'Once I tried to play the flute but it just created an awful noise. My father who was present during the incident asked me not to try this and only concentrate on singing,' she quips.

Naznin compares singing to worshipping. 'Being a singer is not easy,' she says. 'You don't just wake up one fine morning and become a singer. You have to earn it through practice,' adds the singer, while also believing that she still has a lot to learn. 'There is no end to learning. When it comes to music I'm like an unsatisfied soul, seeking new lessons to improve all the while,' says Naznin.

However, Naznin is really disappointed that melodious songs are not being sung or written now days. 'The lack of melodious songs is greatly affecting our industry. Nothing mentionable has occurred in music industry in the last few years that can enrich our archives for the next generation. Right now, people listen to a particular track for a few days and then they just forget it,' she says.

Naznin also urges singers to learn singing first. 'When you turn on the TV channels, you'll see a lot of reality shows. While I really appreciate the initiatives, I do not appreciate what happens once the show is over,' she says.

'The winners of the shows are treated like stars, as if they have learned everything. Instead of putting them into institutions, so that they can learn more, they are used like products for a certain period of time. And after that the same channels find new talents and nobody cares about the previous season's winners anymore. Using these kids for earning money is like child labour. If this is how it continues, we'll have nothing good in our music industry. If you look at Indian reality shows like Sa Re Ga Ma and others, you'll notice that their kids know classical very well. When they'll grow up, obviously they'll do better.'

Unknown to most, this talented singer also writes poem and has an inclination towards reading books. 'Books are one of my weaknesses. I used to be a member of the Biswa Sahitya Kendra.' She has also published three books, titled Shey, Thote Valobasha and Priomukh.

Her favourite singers are Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Parvin Sultana, Rashid Khan and Ajay Chakraborti.

This usually cheerful lady is happiest when her family is happy. 'I get the ultimate satisfaction when I see my family members happy. I am also content if I can help people at their hard times standing by their side,' she says.

The busy singer will be in the country till Eid as exactly on Eid day, she will be performing in shows in two different countries. 'I'm now thinking how I'll manage if the flight gets delayed,' says Naznin.

When asked about how it feels to celebrate Eid with fans, she says 'See, people who live abroad mostly do not have their families with them to celebrate Eid. These expatriates feel the Eid festivities only when such programmes are arranged for them as all the Bangladeshis end up gathering at one place. As an artist this is more important to me rather than thinking of my own Eid.'